

USCAND SEMINAR SERIES

# UofSC Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders

## Catch Me If You Can: Novel Mechanisms of Social Functioning and Intervention in Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Fluid and competent social behavior is a crucial element of youth development. Understanding of this complex process is especially crucial for those with characteristic impairments in social functioning, such as those with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). While ample work has aimed to describe such deficits, only recently has research begun to uncover theoretically-sound mechanisms underlying them. Likewise, little research has attempted to employ such mechanisms to improve and customize evidence-based interventions designed to affect social functioning (social competence interventions). This talk presents an approach designed to achieve several complementary aims. First, it elucidates novel electrophysiological, perceptual, and cognitive predictors of diverse social outcomes in youth with social deficits in order to advance parsimonious models of youth social development. Second, it uses such predictors to produce targeted, optimized evidence-based social competence interventions, which call into question theoretical assumptions of traditional, larger intervention packages. Finally, it reveals individual differences in the relationship between these predictors and intervention outcomes, thereby producing individually-tailored treatment response profiles that maximize responsiveness to social skills interventions. Collectively, this work suggests the need – and provides direction – for novel models of etiology, development, and plasticity of social functioning in youth with ASD.



**Tuesday, February 11**

**4:00 - 5:00 p.m.**

**Hamilton College 322**

*\*Space may be limited*



**Matthew D. Lerner, Ph.D.** is an Associate Professor of Psychology Psychiatry, & Pediatrics in the Department of Psychology at Stony Brook University, where he directs the Social Competence and Treatment Lab. He is the founding Director and current Research Director of the Spotlight Program at the Northeast Arc in Massachusetts, a year-round program for social competence and confidence development, serving more than 200 youth annually. Dr. Lerner's research focuses on understanding emergence and "real world" implications of social problems in children and adolescents (especially those with Autism Spectrum Disorders [ASD]), as well as development, evaluation, and dissemination of novel, evidence-based approaches for ameliorating those problems.

If you have any questions, please contact Nichole Mayberry at [mayberrn@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:mayberrn@mailbox.sc.edu).



**Arts and Sciences**